

## H. Owen Reed Conductor's Notes for La Fiesta Mexicana

The Mexican, as a result of his religious heritage, feels an inner desire to express love and honor for his Virgin. The Mexican fiesta, which is an integral part of this social structure, is a study in contrasts: It is both serious and comical, festive and solemn, devout and pagan, boisterous and tender.

*"La Fiesta Mexicana,"* which attempts to portray musically one of these fiestas, is divided into three movements. These movements, plus possible choreographic notes, are described below.

### I. Prelude and Aztec Dance

The tolling of the church bells and the bold noise of fireworks at midnight officially announce the opening of the fiesta (opening pages of the score). Groups of Mexicans from near and far slowly descend upon the huge court surrounding the old cathedral—some on foot, some by burro, and still others on bleeding knees, suffering out of homage to a past miracle.

After a brave effort at gaiety, the celebrators settle down on their serapes to a restless night (No. 1) until the church bells and fireworks again intrude upon the early quiet of the Mexican morn (No. 4).

At midday a parade is announced by the blatant blare of trumpets (No. 5). A band is heard in the distance (No. 6). The attention is focused on the Aztec dancers, brilliantly plumed and masked, who dance in ever-increasing frenzy to a dramatic climax (No. 7 to end of the movement).

### II. Mass

The tolling of the bells is now a reminder that the fiesta is, after all, a religious celebration. The rich and poor slowly gather within the walls of the old cathedral for contemplation and worship.

### III. Carnival

Mexico is at its best on the days of the fiesta, a day on which passion governs the love, hate and joy of the Mestizo and the Indio. There is entertainment for both young and old—the itinerant circus (first part of the movement), the market, the bull fight, the town band, and always the cantinas with their band of mariachis (Nos. 22-28)—on the day of days: fiesta.